

LIBERTY WING HERITAGE

48th Fighter Group helped set stage for



File photo

Maj. Ralph Peterson and Sgt. Emil Kubricek of the 492nd Fighter Squadron observe as P-47s attack a German armored unit near Cambrai, France, Oct. 13, 1944. Personnel from all three of the 48th's squadrons took turns rotating as ground liaison officers with frontline armored or infantry units.

Huddled inside the pitching confines of landing craft poised off shore, several hundred thousand U.S., British and Canadian troops waited to breach the walls of "Fortress Europe."

It's June 6, 1944, Operation Warlord, "D-Day," is about to enter its final and decisive phase... the allied invasion of Western Europe.

But before allied ground troops could breach the bunkers, artillery positions, machine gun nests, booby traps and anti-tank traps scattered across more than 2,500 miles of European beaches, these defenses had to be softened up. This task was given to the allied air forces who launched an intensive pre-invasion air campaign that was designed to cripple Germany's ability to reinforce its coastal defenses.

From April 1, 1944, throughout the invasion, more than 10,000 Royal Air Force and U.S. Army Air Force bombers and fighters destroyed targets throughout France, Germany and Belgium. These targets included crucial railroad links, bridges and air bases.

These forces included U.S. B-24 and B-17 heavy bombers, B-26 medium bombers, P-47 and P-51 fighter bombers assigned to the U.S. Army Air Force's 8th and 9th Air Forces, stationed in East Anglia. Among these forces were 75 P-47 Thunderbolts from the 48th Fighter Group stationed at Ibsley Air Field, Southampton.

The 48th FG aircrews and beach cover, bomb support the group forces. also flew reconnaissance Day invasion. During the 48th aircraft flew 1,965 tons of bombs and fired 10 caliber ammunition.

More than 326,000 allied warships, 2,700 support craft and 13,000 fighter port aircraft participated in the invasion.

Between June 6 and June 10, 1944, the 48th FG and its sister units flew air support combat sorties, convoys, trains and armored

After June 18, 1944, the 48th Fighter Group experienced hip-hopping across France and Germany; following the U.S. Fifth Army's advance into Germany.

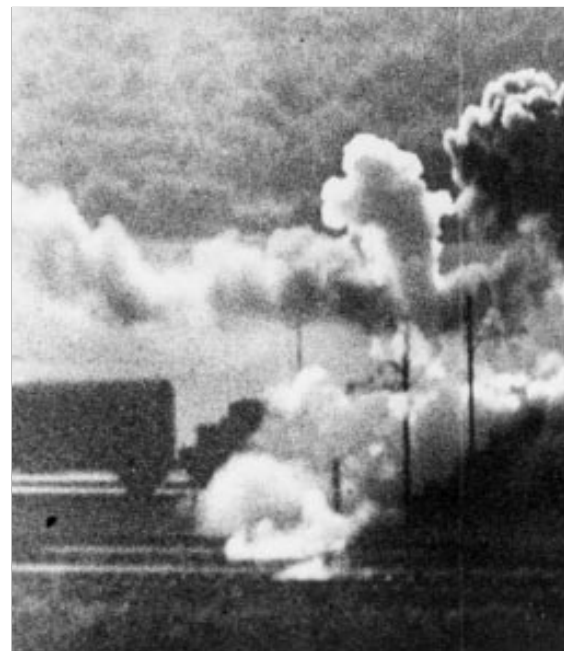
(Compiled by SSgt. [Name] 48th Fighter Wing public affairs)

Four F-15E Strike Eagles from the 48th Fighter Wing and four Stratotankers from the 48th Wing at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base re-enact a World War II Group mission from D-Day to Ukraine. The F-15s were at Lakenheath Saturday at Myrhorod AB, Ukraine.

"I came in blazing with my guns wide open and dropped my bomb right under the tread of the tank .

. . . when bullets hit my plane. I couldn't have been more than 10 feet off the ground as I went over the tank when my engine burst into flames and the plane became a flying torch. Behind the tank on the road was a hill, and I pulled my stick back to gain altitude. I realized I had to get out of the plane fast. The flames were a solid mass around me but were kept out of the cockpit by the closed canopy. At about 500 feet I opened my canopy . . . released the belt, and pushed out. As I got out on the right side, flames began to lick at me. I went through intense heat fanned by oil from the engine. The second I was clear of the plane, I pulled my rip cord and felt a jerk. I didn't have time to look to see if my chute had opened before my feet hit the ground. When I started up the hill, a German soldier came running down toward me with a drawn Luger pistol. 'Yep, it's over,' I thought to myself. And it was."

Capt. Mozart Kaufman, 494th Fighter Squadron, on his final mission July 30, 1944, before spending the next 10 months as a prisoner of war in Stalag Luft 1.



Jan. 15, 1941

48th Bombardment Group (Light) activated at Savannah AB, Ga.

Aug. 5, 1943

48th Bombardment Group (Dive) redesignated 48th Fighter Bomber Group

Nov. 7, 1945

48th Fighter Bomber Group inactivated at Seymour Johnson Field, N.C.

July 10, 1952

48th Fighter Bomber Group activated at Chaumont, France

er D-Day

carried out convoy
ing and strafing to
The unit's aircrews
missions for the D-
ne invasion period,
orties, dropped 499
51,000 rounds of .50

lied ground troops,
ort ships, 2,500 land-
er, bomber and trans-
in the D-Day inva-

ay 8, 1944, the 48th
w thousands of close
striking enemy con-
units.

members of the 48th
d a nomadic lifestyle,
e, Belgium and Ger-
first and Third Armies.

*Scott Davis, 48th
airs)*

agles from the 4th
two KC-135R
916th Air Refuel-
Johnson, N.C., will
r II 4th Fighter
ebden, England,
will arrive at RAF
and depart for
e, Tuesday.



File photo

The most-produced aircraft in World War II, the P-47 Thunderbolt, was heavily respected by the enemy who hated it, and loved by the men who flew it. All three of the 48th Fighter Group's squadrons operated the P-47.



File photos

Above, combat engineers work on the dirt runway at Deux-Jumeaux, France, while a 48 FG Thunderbolt launches to complete another combat sortie June 22, 1944. Left, a 493rd Fighter Squadron gun camera catches this locomotive spewing steam as .50 caliber rounds impact its frame. The 48th Fighter Group's main targets were armor and troop concentrations, rolling stock (train engines and freight cars) and other tactical targets.



Quick Fact

Allied pilots flew approximately 15,000 sorties on D-Day. It is an effort unprecedented in concentration and size.

July 8, 1958

Wing activated

48th Fighter Bomber Wing redesignated as the 48th Tactical Fighter Wing

Jan. 15, 1960

48th Fighter Wing moves to RAF Lakenheath